

## ***Immutability 7-20-00 revised 5-12-02***

Malachi 3:6 (NIV)<sup>6</sup> *"I the LORD do not change."*

Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)<sup>8</sup> *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

We have been looking at the attributes of God that should continually be on the increase in our own lives. There are, however, attributes that we will never have because they are solely characteristic of the Creator. He is all knowing, all-powerful and He is present everywhere. We will never be like that. He is also immutable or unchanging. This characteristic of unchangeableness is an attribute that sets God apart from His creatures. It is our very nature to change, for we had a beginning and we live in time. It is, in fact, our hope that we will be changed and mature. In many different Bible studies we have seen the blessing that trials are, in our lives. The result that God intends is our maturity, completeness, and that what we lack be added to us. What a contrast when we consider the God to Whom any addition would be less than the perfection that He is. He is ever the same for as He declared to Moses, "I AM that I AM." He has no need of change. The Hebrews revered this name, JHWH. It means He is the One who was and is and is to come. He dwells outside of time and is therefore the same throughout time.

Thank God He cannot change for it would mean He is something less than perfect. You see, because He is perfect He cannot change. To change would mean He was not perfect, infinite, and so our hope in Him would not be certain. He cannot change for the better for He is already perfect, and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse. That is why He is called our Rock. The world all around us is changing, decaying, growing, dying, and fluid even when it appears stable. But God is always the same. In fact He is the only thing that does not change.

Psalms 102:25-27 (NIV) <sup>25</sup> *In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.* <sup>26</sup> *They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.* <sup>27</sup> *But you remain the same, and your years will never end.*

It is this unchangeableness of God that merits our total trust. It is the nature of man to look to man for guidance, but as Jacob said of Rueben, so we can say of all men, *"unstable as water"*. We are moved by our circumstances and conditions, sloshing one way and then the other. No wonder Isa. 2:22 tells us, *"Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?"*

No human can be depended upon. How many times have you placed hope in a man, a mutable creature, and have been disappointed? God let that man disappoint you, for that causes you to turn your eyes back to the One who does not change, God Almighty. Psalms 146:3 (NIV)<sup>3</sup> *Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. If I disobey God in this matter, **I need to be disappointed** to turn my eyes back on the One who never changes. Do not set your hope on a pastor. That is a sure*

formula for disappointment and heartache. Walk personally with God. Meet Him in His Word, and He will never fail you. He may not act as you would desire Him to, but He will be faithful and good to you. That is who He is. That will never change.

If you set your eyes on me to deliver a word from the Lord each week and do not hear what God is speaking to you or through your brothers and sisters as they share their gifts, then you can expect me to make some huge mistake. God will allow that in His faithfulness to get us back on track, our eyes on Him and off of a man. My gift is merely to preach the Word, not to lead. That is the Shepherd's job. I may be a bellwether that follows and can help you follow in some ways, but keep your eyes on the Shepherd. He's the Leader. Paul said, "Follow me AS I follow Christ." You can follow me but your eyes better be on Christ to see that I am following Him. AMEN? I am just one of the sheep, changeable and fallible. All those in leadership roles are merely sheep that follow the Shepherd. We need each other, because individually we would get sidetracked. I won't go on into all the wisdom of God in planning His church to have elders, but just note that man has a tendency to look to man, and man is so wishy-washy compared to the Solid Rock JESUS.

God does not change in His being, or in His attributes, or in His determinations. We have mentioned that His being is unchanging. We see in the Scripture's description that His attributes do not change. His Word is forever settled in heaven. (Ps. 119:89) His love is eternal for He says, "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*" Over and over His love is referred to as unfailing. (Jer. 31:3) His mercy is called 'everlasting' (Ps. 100:5) God has never been less than the only wise God. His holiness has never fallen short of perfection or the seraphim would not cry the triple "Holy". His judgements have ever been true and righteous altogether. He is and ever will be the perfect and infinite God. Pause for a moment and consider again the vast difference between you and your Creator.

He does not change His plan. "*The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.*" Ps 33:11 We change our minds because we did not have all the information, or we did not foresee something, or we did not have the power to do what we hoped. None of these conditions apply to God, for He knows all, and sees all from before, and has all power. What He plans He carries out. The choices of man do not derail Him one bit. As Job declared, "*He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth.*" (Job 23:13) Hebrews 6:17 speaks of the unchanging nature of His purpose.

Some of the language of Scripture is for our benefit that we might relate to a personal God, not some ethereal unspecific entity. That is why in some places terms are used that we can relate to. Scripture speaks of God repenting that He made man (Gen. 6:6) but it also declares that God is not a man that He should repent. (1Sam. 15:29) We know that Scripture doesn't contradict itself – but terms are used to help us relate. For example, God is spoken of as having eyes, hands and ears yet we know He is spirit and does not physically have these "parts". In using these terms we, in our limited capacity to comprehend, are better able to relate. Scripture refers to Him rising early,

and waking, yet we know He neither slumbers nor sleeps. In these cases, poetic language is used so that we might be able to relate.

I'd like to make a side point we all need to have clear grasp of. I see most people, including myself, get hung up on a word, an interpretation, an understanding of a certain verse. Then when a verse that seems to contradict it comes up, we just don't listen. We cling to what we know, or think we know, instead of digging in to understand the apparent contradiction. Every word of God is pure, and if you seek then you will find. When Scripture clearly says something that sounds opposed to your understanding then it is a chance for you to learn and adjust to the truth of the Word. It may be a chance to humble ourselves and just say, "I don't know." Too often, we twist the Word to fit our perceptions, instead of letting the Word shape our perceptions.

In light of the truth of God's immutability why do we pray? Some people talk as if they were changing God's mind or getting Him to do something He didn't intend to do. If we pray according to His will He hears us. (1Jn 5:14) So why pray? Because He tells us to ask. He wants to include you in on the plan and for you to be a co-laborer with Him. That, too, is part of His plan. How wonderful and yet beyond comprehension. Yet as A. Pink has written "To ask for something not in accordance with His will is not prayer, but rank rebellion." We are learning to pray His heart as we let the Holy Spirit direct our prayers, praying through us. We know when we pray those things He has placed on our heart that He will answer. Then we lay up treasure in heaven as a co-worker with God.

What a comfort to know the God we petition in prayer is the same One that answered the prayers of those men and women of God in Scripture. He is the same God that answered David's prayers for protection. He is the same God that answered Solomon's prayer for wisdom. He is the same God that walked with the Apostles for three years, patiently teaching them about the Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom thinking. He is the same God that answered the Apostles' prayer for boldness. He will do the same with you if you will ask, seek, and knock. He hasn't changed.

At the same time what stern warning this should be to those who do not bow their knee and do as they please in rebellion against the God who had the earth open its mouth and swallow Korah and the rebels. He is the same God today as the One that burned Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. He is the same God that flooded the earth in the time of Noah. He is just as righteously angry about sin everyday as He was through the Old Testament. And in the New – He is the same God that struck Annanias and Saphira dead for agreeing to lie to the Holy Spirit. He is the same God that struck Simon the Sorcerer with blindness for wanting to buy the Holy Spirit. What a healthy fear of God should strike the hearts of the rebellious to learn of His unchanging character. He can deal just as harshly today with individuals who continually snub His grace and mercy. He deals just as mercifully as with the thief on the cross next to His.

When Israel left Egypt God led them to a place where the mountains were on each side and the sea in front. Pharaoh's army came behind them to attack. The pillar of cloud moved behind them and stood between them and the Egyptian army. On the Israelite side the pillar was light. On the Egyptian side it caused utter darkness. To know that God is unchanging can either be the light of the pillar of cloud that lighted the way of the Children of Israel, or the dark side that put the Egyptian army in darkness. Which is it to you? It depends if you are following Him through the wilderness of this world as a stranger and pilgrim here, trusting entirely on Him as your light and your life, your Rock, OR driven by the orders of one in opposition to the plan of God. Which side of the unchanging cloud is your life at this moment? If the sea is before you and an army of rebels against God behind you, God will prove to be the same unchanging God as He was in the Exodus. You will walk through the sea of life on dry ground. But if you are led by the world's desires, in darkness, chasing what you can't catch, you will find yourself drowning in the Red Sea.

Our lives are filled with constant change. It is the one thing we can count on in this world. Tomorrow will not be like today. It may bring trials or it may bring great joy. In a split second our lives may be off in an entirely different direction. The ever-changing conditions of this world cannot change our God. His heart will always be the same, and time will never bring lines of age upon His face. Everything else in the universe has changed and will continue to change. The sun will burn itself out, the earth will one-day be no more. Like an old housecoat, the Everlasting One will throw it aside. But He will be the same as the day He created it, for His years have no end. Psalms 145:3 (NIV)<sup>3</sup> *Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.*

We bob around on the sea of this troublesome changing world wondering what tomorrow will bring, but our anchor runs down to the unchanging floor of the sea, the foundation of all things. One day we will step off the seas of this life. With feet of faith we'll step onto the unmovable shore of the Unchanging One. We'll know He is the same One to Whom our anchor held fast, the One that gave us our sense of stability in this changing place. He is our Rock. He is the First and the Last.

With Him there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. In that glorious Day we'll find His love is the same as the day He saved us. He has loved us with an everlasting love. His mercy and faithfulness will still be as huge as the day He forgave our sins, and we can count on that remaining constant forever and ever.

"Change and decay all around I see, Oh Thou who changest not, abide with me!"